



## **GAM AGM and Members message October 2024**

It's the time of the year to look back and report the year ending 31st March 2024. I have decided to combine my Annual Chair's report with a message to you our membership.

First, the **GAM AGM 2024 is ONLINE, on Thursday 10th October 2024**. Do join us for a chance to hear the formal reports and express your views.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting.

When: Oct 10, 2024 Login at 19:15 for a 19:30 start.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rceiprDwrEteD32utL-eAWwCLiNKNVRdg>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

John Holcroft, our new Secretary has already sent out the formal calling notice and associated documents. Please make sure you have reviewed the contents.

### Paul Whitehead

This brings me to a most significant event that occurred at the end of last year. Paul Whitehead, our Secretary decided it was time to resign/retire from the role he had held for 16 years and several other tasks he had taken on over the COVID years to support Committee roles from members who had moved on. Paul has been a GAM stalwart for 30 years, and to recognise this the Committee has voted Paul Honorary Membership, joining John Panting and Paul Wallace-Stock. I would like to add my personal gratitude as Chair. Paul's unstinting support, huge knowledge of GAM history and procedures, and preparedness to deal with many of IAM RS HQ's vagaries has kept me in line and made my role much easier. Thank you so much Paul!

Thankfully Paul agreed to support a period of transition, particularly to new Secretary John Holcroft, and continue as Membership Secretary until replaced.

Back to my 23/24 report, I thought I should review some highlights.

### Observers & Observing

I want to recognise the great work of all our Observers. The 2024 test results, 25 Passes including 9 F1RSTS speak for themselves. The team led by David Clifton (Chief Observer) have worked hard on delivering both allocated observer runs (AOR) and Sunday run-day (SRD). During the year we have seen an increasing shift from Sunday runs to AORs, formerly called 'Non-Sunday Runs'. We're very fortunate that so many of our Observers are prepared to coach during the week.

We always need to reinforce our Observer team recognising that team members move on from time to time and retirement is inevitable. We know that new Observers are most likely to come from our new members (Associates who have recently passed the test), and we have been working hard gently twisting arms. IAM RS have now revised the Observer qualification to a single National Observer (NO) level, dispensing with the Local Observer (LO) category. This now means that all new Observers are trained by GAM and tested by IAM RS to the NO standard, and all our legacy LO's must be tested for NO qualification.

During and post COVID we have seen an increase in Associates with neurodiversity. Their needs bring a new coaching challenge that GAM is looking to become more aware of. HQ provided some

very general help for both riding and driving in March 2020 in a paper called “Neurodiversity Documentation”. This sets out to address conditions such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Autism & Asperger’s, Tourette’s and ADHD. The focus is on “The System” of course, but the guidance provided is really very general and doesn’t help volunteers refine their approaches. GAM has a plan to develop some more specific guidance, targeted at the key Advanced Driving competencies.....we’ll see if this helps. So far, we have some good experience with Associates who engage and help us understand what they find difficult.

The final aspect of Observing I wish to note concerns vehicle technology. We’re finding a rapidly expanding range of car ages, drivetrains, technology and sophistication. The technology includes *Advanced Driver Assistance Systems* (ADAS), including mandatory functions like Intelligent Speed Assist (ISA). Not all our Associates are ‘petrol’ or ‘electro’ heads, and many arrive for coaching with little real knowledge of their vehicles and in particular some of the new complex functionality. The salespeople at dealers seem to treat them as magic black boxes, handing over the keys with little guidance. It has become a real challenge for our Observers keeping up to speed to ensure we can coach effectively. As exposure to EVs increases this situation should improve. The good news is that *The System* doesn’t change, and in my experience, once you’ve conquered the tech the driving of these cars is easier.

### GBC Depot

We’ve enjoyed GBC’s support of a free venue for probably around 40 years. During the year we knew that our time at GBC Depot was going to come to an end due to GBC’s plans to move to new premises in the Slyfield area, with the Depot becoming the *Weyside Urban Village*. The old premises and the whole depot environment were in a state of decay, so we needed to plan a move. It was decided to move to Ripley Village Hall, now beautifully rebuilt and expanded. You may recall that GAM were small donors to the Ripley Village Hall fundraising appeal.

### Committee activity & available positions (gaps)

We have appealed for new committee members regularly at AGMs and in Newsletters over the years. The gaps were Secretary-in-waiting, Membership Secretary, Associate Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, and IT support. Paul’s resignation triggered a refreshed appeal that has borne some fruit in 2024/5. The current situation is that we are still in need of a President, Membership Secretary, Newsletter/News editor and general committee members to shadow and ensure we have a succession plan. If you want to know more about how to get involved, get in touch with me for a chat.

Finally, I want to update you about how we communicate with you. You will all have noticed that we have dropped the printed and posted Newsletter. We decided on this approach because we were without an Editor, contributions were rather sparse, and the cost of printing and postage had escalated. As a previous Editor I was finding that one or two of us were writing the whole document. As mentioned above, an Editor is still a gap. Our current intention is to post news from time to time on the Website, Facebook, LinkedIn and X, and also email the membership periodically. We need someone to look after hunting for news-worthy material and managing inputs from Members. We hope this role will attract new support.



Gordon Farquharson, GAM Chair 6<sup>th</sup> October 2024